



Voting Information News

July 2004 ☞ Vol. 14, No. 7

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Voting Assistance Officers

“To Do” This Month:

☐ Read this issue thoroughly, incorporate these items in your voting assistance program, and distribute to all members in your organization.

☐ Keep your email address current (and mailing address if applicable) to ensure uninterrupted delivery of this newsletter and critical news releases (only available through email).

☐ For continuity of your voting assistance program, ensure that your assistant or successor subscribes to this newsletter by having him or her write to vote@fvap.ncr.gov.

☐ Review and update your voting assistance program **continuity folder**.

☐ Stay Tuned For These Upcoming Feature Articles:

- Armed Forces Voters Week
- Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot
- 2004 Post Election Survey
- And more....

***A roundup of voting news from the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP)
For voters, potential voters and those who assist voters.***

VAO - Key To Voter Understanding Absentee Voting

The FVAP provides U.S. citizens worldwide a broad range of non-partisan information and assistance to facilitate their participation in the democratic process - regardless of where they work or live. Critical to the success of these programs are the thousands of Uniformed Services Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs) and hundreds of U.S. Embassy and Consulate VAOs located around the globe. These individuals, in military or civilian life, are responsible for providing accurate, non-partisan voting information and assistance to those citizens attempting to exercise their Constitutional right to vote. In fact, the knowledge and effectiveness of a VAO, combined with a thoroughly implemented voting assistance plan, may very well determine whether a person will, or will not understand the procedures for absentee voting. The VAO is responsible for carrying out the FVAP mission, which consist of three distinct goals. These are to:

- Inform and educate U.S. citizens of their right to vote;
- Foster voting participation; and
- Protect the integrity of, and simultaneously enhance, the electoral process.

The U.S. military has an extensive Chain-of-Command support mechanism for its VAOs. In addition, the Department of State offers voting services through its Embassies and Consulates to all U.S. citizens outside the United States. At the same time, corporations and organizations with U.S. citizens overseas are strongly encouraged to designate and support VAOs. VAOs are key to the voter understanding the absentee voting procedures.

VAOs are responsible for carrying out the most vital aspects of the absentee voting program, providing direct assistance to the U.S. citizen. This is the main reason that

they need to have a thorough understanding of the election process, the resources available to them, knowledge of the voting materials used, as well as the proper way of completing the Federal standard forms.

U.S. Embassy/Consulate VAOs are responsible for reaching out to U.S. citizens abroad. Examples of these are: Department of State personnel, military members in the compounds, Federal employees, U.S. organizations and businesses, and retired personnel.

U.S. Uniformed Service VAOs are responsible for reaching out to all unit members including eligible dependents. Uniformed Service VAOs stationed overseas may also provide assistance to Federal employees. Although VAOs stationed overseas are responsible for members in their unit, they may also provide assistance to U.S. citizens overseas. In the performance of the VAO duties (e.g.: registration drives, public announcements, newspaper articles) they may be contacted by Federal employees, contractors and retirees, etc. asking for assistance. The VAO may provide voting materials and guidance, but may not serve as witness or provide notary other than to military members and eligible dependants, unless allowed by state law.

VAOs should become familiar with the FVAP website, www.fvap.gov. By selecting Voting Assistance Information from the FVAP home page, the VAOs will have access to roles, responsibilities and guidelines to help in the performance of their duties. They will also have access to the DoD Directive 1000.4, DoD Voting Action Plan, PowerPoint presentation for training, and many more items of interest. Another important source for VAO information is this newsletter. ☑

Helpful Hints For Voters... Pass Them Along!

Attention all United States Citizens Residing Overseas and Members of the Uniformed Services on Active Duty! Please review the following helpful hints. If followed, these suggestions would help simplify the absentee voting process and eliminate many possible reasons for disenfranchisement.

Voter Registration

Unregistered absentee voters should request their ballots at least 60 days before the election and registered voters at least 45 days before the election. Remember, voter registration can be affected or cancelled for several reasons: not voting for a period of time, changed residence since the last registration or election, changed name since the last registration or election, or changing political party preference (primary elections only) since the last registration. Also, registering to vote at a new place of legal residence will cancel your registration at your previous residence and might cause you to incur state or local tax liabilities (for more information see Appendix E of the current *Voting Assistance Guide* titled "Probable State Income Tax Liability").

Legal Voting Residence

Your legal voting residence address (item 3 of the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) SF 76) helps determine the type of ballot a local election official sends to you. So, even if the home has been sold, rented or is no longer there because the site has been redeveloped, that address continues to be your legal voting residence for voting purposes as long as you continue claiming that state as your legal residence.

Determining a voting residence is a concern to many. Some citizens do not know where they should be voting and what state they should claim as their home of legal voting residence.

To help address residency questions, the FVAP provides general voting residency guidelines that Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs) and citizens can refer to when questions arise. The February 2004 issue of this newsletter (available at www.fvap.gov) dedicates two pages of voting residency guidelines. The FVAP website provides downloadable *Guidelines For Members Of The Uniformed Services And Family Members* and *Guidelines for Citizens Residing Outside the United States*. Select I Want to Vote from the FVAP home page, then select Residency Guidelines. Chapter 2, Page 8 of the *Voting Assistance Guide* also provides "Requirements for Voting, Establishing Voting Residence and Registration".

Note: These are only general guidelines to help determine state of legal residence for voting purposes. VAOs who have difficulty answering these questions should have voter consult with their legal counsel.

Notarizing Voting Materials

Always check your state instructions (Chapter 3 of the current *Voting Assistance Guide*) to determine whether your state requires a witness or notary on the FPCA and/or the ballot return envelope. Military personnel, including noncommissioned officers, who are designated as VAOs are authorized, in accordance with Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 1000.4 of April 14, 2004, to administer oaths (notary services) in connection with voter registration and voting to members of the military and their eligible dependants. However, they may not act as a notary for DoD or other U.S. government civilian personnel or non-governmental civilians unless able to do so in another capacity. United States citizens overseas are afforded full voting assistance at all U.S. Embassies and Consulates. Embassy/Consulate VAOs will provide notary services for voting materials free of charge.

Where To Send It

Did you know that if you send your FPCA or the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) to the wrong local election official, it may use up precious time needed to get your application or ballot delivered and may affect the chances of your vote being received on time to be counted? For example, if you send your FPCA to the County Clerk and the state requires you to send it to the Registrar of Voters your FPCA may take more time to be delivered as it is forwarded to the correct office. This may cause a delay in getting your FPCA processed by the local election office.

Similarly, if you are an overseas voter and you use the FWAB and mail it to the wrong office other than the one instructed to you by the state, your FWAB may need to be forwarded and may not arrive on the time required by state law to be counted. Note: Use of the FWAB is based on specific requirements outlined in Chapter 2, page 12 of the *Voting Assistance Guide*.

It is vitally important that when completing these federal forms you follow the instructions for your state in Chapter 3, Section III of the *Guide*, titled **Where To Send It**. Each state has its own specific office for receiving absentee voting materials. The title of the person receiving the voting materials is highlighted in magenta. Make sure this title is entered on the first line of the addressee. (Continued on next page)

HELPFUL HINTS FOR VOTERS... continued

Postage for Mailing From Overseas

The FPCA does not require postage for voting materials if mailed in the U.S. postal system, including all U.S. military post offices (APO, FPO) overseas as well as diplomatic pouches. Many Embassies and Consulates have access to U.S. military post offices. Those that have access will accept the FPCA and give it to the U.S. military post office. The FPCA may also be sent postage-free through the diplomatic pouch at Embassies and Consulates. However, the diplomatic pouch may not have a regular pick-up schedule. If you are mailing election materials from overseas and do not have access to a U.S. Embassy/Consulate or an APO/FPO address, please affix the proper postage necessary to get the materials into the U.S. postal system. NOTE: If using the online FPCA (OFPCA), you must place it in an envelope and apply proper postage. The OFPCA is available at www.fvap.gov. Select On-line Federal Post Card Application.

Electronic Transmission

Visit www.fvap.gov, select State By State Instructions, and find out if your state allows electronic transmission of voting materials. If so, use this method to expedite processing of your voting materials. When utilizing the electronic transmission service, please refer to Appendix C of the *Voting Assistance Guide* for a cover page and additional information. Most states that permit faxing of the voted ballot require the voter to sign a waiver of his or her right of a secret ballot. **After faxing, immediately mail the original signed and dated hardcopy.** Use the following numbers when faxing: DSN 223-5527, (703) 693-5527, or 1-800-368-8683. Additional international toll-free fax numbers are

listed on the FVAP website. From the FVAP home page, select Electronic Transmission (faxing) for a list of toll-free fax numbers from over 50 countries.

Tax Implications

The *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)* provides that exercising the right to vote, in elections for **Federal** offices, under the *Act* should not affect, for purposes of any Federal, state or local tax, the residence or domicile of a person exercising such right. Voting in an election for **Federal offices only** may not be used as the sole basis to determine residency for the purposes of imposing state and local taxes. If you claim a particular state as your residence and have other ties with that state in addition to voting, then you may be liable for state and local taxation, depending upon that particular state law. Appendix E of the *Voting Assistance Guide* (available on the FVAP website) contains information on Probable State Income Tax Liability. Always seek legal advice when contemplating changing your residency.

The Final Say in Determining Eligibility

The Federal Government does not hold elections, the state does. Each of the 55 States and U.S. Territories has its own law for holding elections. The local election official makes the final determination of a voter's eligibility to register and vote in that county, city or state.

Status of Your Application

To reduce the possibility of being left with the uncertainty of the status of your FPCA, FVAP recommends that you provide your contact information when completing the FPCA. (Continued on last page)

Voting Action Officers

Department of State: Office of Overseas Citizens Services

Chief VAO: Mr. Jack Markey, tel: (202) 736-4937, fax: (202) 647-6201, E-mail: markeyjd@state.gov
Deputy VAO: Ms. Bonita Harris, tel: (202) 647-5435, fax: (202) 647-6201, E-mail: harrisbg@state.gov

Service Voting Action Officers

U.S. Dept. of the Army: Mr. James Davis tel: (703) 325-4530 DSN: 221-4530; fax: (703) 325-4532
DSN fax: 221-4532; E-mail: davisj@hoffman.army.mil,
<https://www.perscomonline.army.mil/tagd/pssd/psb/voting/votingindex.htm>

U.S. Dept. of the Navy: LCDR Mark Lofton tel: 1-866-U-ASK-NPC (827-5672); DSN: 882-4606, fax: (901) 874-2785,
DSN fax: 882-2785; E-mail: MILL_navyvote@navy.mil, <http://www.persnet.navy.mil/nvap>

U.S. Dept. of the Air Force: Lt. Col. Lee Shick tel: (210) 565-2338 (MSgt. Julie Schlip), toll free: 1-866-229-7074 (select option 4, then 6 from menu), DSN: 665-2338; fax: (210) 565-2543, DSN fax: 665-2543;
E-mail: afpc/dpsfvotingpgmdlist@randolph.af.mil; <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/votefund/>

U.S. Marine Corps: GySgt Kenneth B. Warford tel: (703) 784-9511, DSN: 278-9511;
fax: (703) 784-9827, DSN fax: 278-9827; E-mail: warfordkb@manpower.usmc.mil
https://lnweb1.manpower.usmc.mil/manpower/mi/mra_ofct.nsf/mrp/Voting+Home

U.S. Coast Guard: YNCS Lori McNaught tel: (202)-267-1636, fax: (202) 267-4823;
E-mail: LMcNaught@comdt.uscg.mil, http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-w/g-wp/g-wpm/g-wpm-1/VotingAssistance/Voting_Assistance.htm

All of the above can also be reached through the DoD Voting Information Center and the FVAP Website.

Federal Voting Assistance Program

Department of Defense
1155 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC
20301-1155

PHONE:
(703) 588-1584
DSN 425-1584

FAX:
(703) 588-0108
DSN 425-0108

VOTING INFORMATION
CENTER:
(703) 588-1343
DSN 425-1343

TOLL FREE:
1-800-438-VOTE (8683)

*Visit our website for
international toll-free phone
and fax numbers.*

E-MAIL:
vote@fvap.ncr.gov

Website:
www.fvap.gov

Vote!

HELPFUL HINTS FOR VOTERS... continued

In the Remarks Section (item 7) of the FPCA, provide your telephone number (or a local contact) with all country prefixes and/or your e-mail address. Email is increasingly becoming the preferred method of communication. Also, in the remarks section, add other information that may assist local election officials in processing the application. Example: maiden name or other name used, old address, etc.

If the information does not fit in item 7, continue on a separate sheet of paper and place inside the FPCA before sealing. FVAP recommends that FPCAs be sealed with adhesive tape on both sides after applying adhesive tab. *Do not staple the FPCA!*

Provide your fax number in item 5 and include all international prefixes, country or city codes (provide commercial fax numbers only). Even if your state may not allow faxing of the FPCA, the local election official may use your fax number to contact you.

Providing fax, phone and/or email will give the local election official options to

contact you for questions, clarifications or to request additional information on your FPCA. If you do not provide clear contact information on the FPCA it may be impossible to reach you.

For voters that want to know if their application has been denied, the Help America Vote Act now requires that voters be notified. If your FPCA is denied, your state is required by law to notify you and explain why it was denied.

Additional Helpful Hints

- ☐ As soon as you receive your ballot, vote and return it immediately.
- ☐ Have the postal clerk hand stamp the ballot envelope verifying the mailing date.
- ☐ Don't forget about the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) as a back-up write-in ballot for Federal Offices in the General Election. The September 2004 issue of this newsletter will feature information on this important absentee voting resource (will also be available at www.fvap.gov). ☒

Have a Happy & Safe 4th of July!

Federal Voting Assistance Program
Department of Defense
1155 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1155



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39 USC 3406

PAR AVION

OFFICIAL VOTING INFORMATION MATERIAL – FIRST CLASS MAIL

NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IN THE U.S. MAIL – DMM E080